

The Victim Compensation Connection

A Publication of the California
Victim Compensation and
Government Claims Board

August 2004

A Message From the Executive Officer

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to the first issue of the *Victim Compensation Connection*, a newsletter from the Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board. We intend to bring you news about what's happening with compensation issues in California and around the country on a regular basis. The newsletter will keep you updated on the key changes and innovations in the way we do business, the progress with our new automated claims system that is under development, and other important changes that affect your work and the services you provide to victims of crime.

Though I am new as the Executive Officer of the Board, I am not a stranger to crime victim issues. I know many of you from my tenure as a Board Member several years ago, and I am honored to work with you again. As I have begun to meet more California victim service providers over the last few months, I can't tell you how impressed I have been with your spirit, your compassion, and your dedication to helping crime victims.

Please let us know what you think of the newsletter. I look forward to hearing from you and communicating with you in future issues.

Sincerely,



Karen McGagin



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Board Revises Payment Rates for Medical and Dental Expenses

At its meeting on August 27, the three-member Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board voted unanimously to increase the medical and dental treatment reimbursement rates, effective for all bills with dates of service on or after July 1, 2004.

The rates set a new course for the Victim Compensation Program after the Board's action two years ago lowered the medical and dental rates to strengthen the depleted Restitution Fund.

Following the Board's receipt of its annual federal grant, the Restitution Fund stabilized. Board staff analyzed the effect of the rate reductions and conducted a statewide survey of victim advocates and claims specialists. The survey results revealed that the rate reductions were having a negative impact on victims' ability to access treatment. The staff analysis also showed that the Restitution Fund could now sustain the additional expenditures that would result from increasing the rate of payment for dental and medical expenses.

The Board also adopted recommendations to increase victim access to treatment by developing a pilot preauthorization process for dental and medical expenses, reviewing treatment use, designing outreach strategies to publicize the Board actions, and continuing to evaluate strategies for increasing access to mental health treatment.

The Board hopes these changes will help the Victim Compensation Program better serve victims. Please share this information with service providers in your area. If you have any questions about these new rate changes, please call the Board's Customer Service Unit at 1-800-777-9229.

New Rates

The Board set the following rates for dental and medical expenses:

- **Dental Expenses:** Pay 75 percent of the amount billed for dental expenses (which is about 25 percent higher than the current rate).
- **Medical Expenses:** Pay at the Medicare rate plus 20 percent for services covered by Medicare.
 - Pay at 75 percent of the billed amount for services not covered by Medicare.
 - Pay for durable medical equipment (DME) at the Medicare DME rate, except for prosthetics, eyeglasses, and foreign bills as noted below.
- Pay the following at 100 percent:
 - Cosmetic surgery
 - Prosthetics
 - Hearing aids and eyeglasses
 - Foreign providers without regard to the date of service, and accept bills in formats other than the standardized forms required of U.S. providers.

Progress Report: The New System is on Track for 3/05

The Board's year-long project to build a Claims Management and Information System (CMiS) has made significant progress during the last 60 days. Project staff completed the feasibility, definition and design phases and has entered the construction phase. During the next several

months, the project team will present a series of demonstrations on how CMiS will assist staff to provide better services to victims. CMiS implementation is on track and scheduled to be complete in March 2005.

Restitution Fund Nets \$1 Million Through New Program

An additional \$1 million is available for crime victims through the collaboration of three state agencies: the Franchise Tax Board (FTB), the California Department of Corrections (CDC), and the State Controller's Office. The FTB has collected the funds for the Restitution Fund through its Court-Ordered Debt Collection Program. The Board began working collaboratively in FY 02/03 with the FTB and the CDC to establish a process to collect outstanding restitution obligations from former parolees and probationers.

In January FTB began collections from former inmates and probationers who are no longer under CDC supervision. All payments go directly to FTB, and FTB holds them for 20 days before disbursing the money to the Restitution Fund via the State Controller's Office. FTB disburses money weekly to the Restitution Fund and retains a 15 percent administrative fee.

As of August 2, FTB had collected \$1,441,994.89 in outstanding restitution fine debt from post-parolees. Of this amount, the Board will receive \$1,229,969.72 while FTB retains \$212,025.17 in administrative fees.

Extension of Board's September 11th Grant

The federal Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) has approved a six-month extension of the Board's September 11th grant. Family members of September 11th victims and survivors were very pleased to learn that the quarterly support group meetings will continue through the end of this year. The support group meetings have played a significant role in their healing process. Plans are underway for the next support group meeting and September 11th anniversary commemoration to be held on September 18. Therapists from the University of California San Francisco Trauma Recovery Center and Board staff will work with group members to prepare them to plan their own support group meetings in 2005. The Southern California support group already plans meetings without Board staff's assistance.

Upcoming Events

August 31-September 2 Building Partnerships, Creating Access

Sponsored by the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA), this national conference dedicated to ending violence against women with disabilities will be held August 31-September 2 in San Jose, California. www.calcasa.org

September 18-22 Annual International Conference on Family Violence

Sponsored by the Family Violence and Sexual Assault Institute, this conference will be held September 18-22 in San Diego, California. www.fvsai.org

September 13-15 Western Regional Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect

Sponsored by the University of California, Davis, this annual conference for professionals involved in the investigation, evaluation and treatment of abused children will be held September 13-15 at the Hyatt Regency Sacramento. www.ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/cme/Confrence/Confrence.htm

September 25 National Day of Remembrance

Sponsored by the National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children. www.pomc.org